There were 1118 such incidents of firing during July-October, 1997 in which 32 civilians and 11 Indian army personnel lost their lives. In the anti-terrorist operations undertaken by the security forces during this period, 338 militants were killed, while a large number were arrested or surrendered. 73 civilians were killed by terrorists during this period and 62 army personnel lost their lives in anti-terrorist operations.

Arrangement for Haj-1998

948. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the pilgrim quota for Haj-1998 has been fixed;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what is the quota of Gujarat therein; and

(d) the arrangements being made by Government and Haj Committee for Haj-1998?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA): (a) and (b) The quota for pilgrims' under the arrangements made by the Haj Committee for Haj-1998 has been fixed at 66,000.

(c) For Haj-1998, pilgrims' quota for Gujarat State has been fixed by the Haj Committee at 6325.

(d) Arrangements being made by the Government and Haj Committee for Haj-1998 include hiring of accommodation in Makkah, despatch of medicines for use in Indian dispensaries, deputation of approximately 300 Government personnel to Saudi Arabia, including a medical mission, air charter for transporting the pilgrims, preparation of pilgrim passes, and release of foreign exchange 31,000 accommodation units have already been hired in Makkah Partial advance of rentals has been paid to the landlords. Despatch of medicines is underway. Applications from the prospective deputationists have been received and are being processed. Action is underway to obtain visas. For the air charter, quotations received from various airlines are under scrutiny and the charter is expected to be finalised shortly. An orientation programme for Haj pilgrims will take place shortly. Booklets (Haj Guide) in Hindi, English and Urdu are under print.

Bangladeshi assistance to insurgents in Assam

949. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it has been reported that Bangladesh is assisting insurgents in Assam; and

(b) if so, the action proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Government do not have reports that the Govt. of Bangladesh is assisting insurgents in Assam. However, the Government is aware of reports that Indian insurgent groups including those from Assam have been able to misuse Bangladesh territory for their activities including sanctuary, movement of weapons etc. Government's serious concerns at such activities have been taken up with the Bangladesh authorities on a regular basis at high levels. The Govt. of Bangladesh has stated that it does not allow Bangladesh territory for sanctuary, transit, setting up of camps and carrying arms into India by any insurgent and that action is taken to drive out or arrest insurgents found on Bangladesh territory. The Govt. of Bangladesh has agreed to our request to hand over arrested Indian insurgents after due judicial processes are completed.

Protection to Indian Fishermen from the Thai Fishermen

950. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any steps to protect the Indian fishermen living off the Sunderbans in Bay of Bangal from attacks and robbery by Thai fishermen;